# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“The Holy Spirit Living in Us”**

**Romans 8:5-11**

 **September 12, 2021**

The Greek language in which the New Testament was originally written has two words that we translate into the English word “life.” One is bios. This is the word for natural life, created life, the life of the physical body. It is the word from which we get biology, the study of living organisms and their vital processes. The other Greek word for life is “zoe.” This is the word used in the Bible for the spiritual, uncreated life of God. It is this kind of life, the zoe life of God, that the Holy Spirit seeks to make real in every Christian. Not just real is the sense of understanding what it is, but real in the actual living of it. No longer are we as Christians simply living out our bios life, our natural, physical life, but through the work of the Spirit living in us, we participate in the zoe life of God.

Last Sunday we began our current sermon series on the work of the Holy Spirit. We read together the passage from John 14 where Jesus promised his disciples that the Father would send the Spirit. Having sent the Son into the world, the Father was bringing Jesus back to heaven. But, he would not leave his disciples as orphans. Rather, the Father would send another Advocate, another person like Jesus to come alongside his disciples and continue the ministry of Jesus in and through them. That Advocate is the Holy Spirit who not only is with them, but is in them, and will never leave them.

There have been many ways of trying to describe the Trinitarian nature of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. My favorite is to imagine the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in a circle, holding hands. Their life with one another is one of love for each other, and together in divine unity they have one supreme purpose when it comes to human beings. That purpose is to include us in the circle, to include us in the zoe life of God. This is the work of the Spirit, to bring us into the zoe of God and to help us experience that zoe. Not just some day in the future when we die and are resurrected, but today, right now, this very moment, the Holy Spirit is at work in us to make real the life of God in us.

The thing that makes it difficult for believers to experience that kind of life is the sinful human nature with which we are born. When it controls us, when sin is our addiction, our regular habit, our life experiences are dominated by the consequences of sin. Anger, bitterness, hostility, pride, selfishness, and much more are all consequences of our sinful nature, and these will dominate the lives of those who live outside the life of God. But, as Paul says in the passage that we will read together shortly, when the Spirit living in us controls us - when loving God and others becomes our addiction, our regular habit - our life experiences become dominated by the zoe life of God. That kind of life, as we learn in Galatians 5, is characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We will take a closer look at these so-called “fruit of the Spirit” in the coming weeks. With that rather lengthy but, hopefully, helpful introduction, please turn with me to God’s Word as it comes to us through his apostle Paul in Romans 8:5-11

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

The Holy Spirit is the zoe-giver of God, the one who gives zoe to our bios bodies - life to our mortal bodies - by bringing us into the very life of God and including us in the divine circle. It is there, in the life of God, that we begin to see changes in our life from one dominated by the sinful nature to one controlled by our new spiritual nature.

 Perhaps you have observed that sins that you used to enjoy now bring you little or no joy at all. Perhaps you once enjoyed putting down others, making fun of their foolishness. And now, even though people are just as foolish as they ever were, you find yourself less willing to humiliate them. You may have had the experience of reading the Bible, and verses that you had read a number of times before suddenly sprang to life for you, and you realized that God was speaking to your heart. You hear a hymn or a familiar Christian song, and find yourself in tears at its words, deeply moved by something that never touched you before. You watch a movie in which something bad is redeemed into something good, and it touches your heart, not because of the acting but because it represents the truth that God has taken you, in all the badness of your sin, and redeemed you. You now belong to him, you are now his child, his daughter, his son, and you will live with him forever. There is something changing within you, slowly but surely. That is the work of the Spirit, bringing you more and more into both the behavior and the emotions of the zoe life of God.

If you want the Holy Spirit to be bringing about the zoe life of God in you this morning, but are not sure whether or not he lives in you, all you need to do is ask. Jesus spoke these words in Luke 11:13, “So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” There is nothing God wants to do more than give you his Spirit, but he won’t force it on you. There is nothing you can do to earn it. You and I certainly don’t deserve it. So, all that is left for us to do is to ask, sincerely and humbly, and God who is faithful, who has promised to give his Spirit to all who ask, will do so. Right now, right here.